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UNCLAS MUSCAT 001013

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/ARPI, DS/IP/NEA

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KCRM SOCI ASEC MU

SUBJECT: SHOOTING AT EDUCATION MINISTRY KILLS TWO

**¶11. (SBU)** Summary: Muscat is reeling from a June 27 shooting by a disgruntled former teacher at the Ministry of Education, leaving two persons dead and at least four others in serious condition. The shooter, a religious studies teacher fired for unethical behavior, committed suicide following a police chase. This random violence is unprecedented in Oman and will likely lead to questions as to how it could have happened. End summary.

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Disgruntled Teacher  
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**¶12. (SBU)** A former Ministry of Education employee opened fire June 27 at the Muscat Governorate's Directorate General of Education in the central Muscat neighborhood of Al Wattayah shortly before 10:00 am. Embassy and Internet sources reported that the shooter, Muhammad Khamis Mubarak al-Salhi, a 35-year old teacher of Islamic studies, was terminated last year for drinking on the job and unethical behavior. He reportedly started shooting after Ministry employees informed him that his request to be reinstated had been rejected. Two persons, including a female employee, were killed immediately and four others are reported in serious-to-critical condition at nearby Khawla Hospital. The Royal Oman Police report that the shooter committed suicide after being surrounded by police following a vehicular pursuit that ended in a neighborhood near to Embassy housing. Hospital officials declined to give further information on injured employees.

**¶13. (SBU)** Participants on the Internet message board Al Sablah expressed shock, noting that such an incident has never happened before in Oman. They speculate that Ministry of Education senior officials will be held accountable for not dealing with the disgruntled former teacher more effectively. That ministry has received considerable criticism in recent years for slow promotions and no wage increases (a complaint common to other ministries as well). There was also public criticism of a change in 2004 to the Islamic studies curriculum for grades 11 and 12.

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Comment  
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**¶14. (SBU)** There is no evidence to suggest the shooting was related to any broader criticisms of the ministry, nor is there anything to indicate the violence was not simply a tragic, random act. No details have yet been released on the weapon used or how it was obtained. The official Omani News Agency released a brief statement on the afternoon of June 27, and the story was the lead item on the 5:00 pm local television news.

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